

Appendix D - Purpose and Need for Action

This appendix was provided to give a quick overview of the purpose and need of the Fourmile proposed action, more information can be found in the EA.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is tasked with implementing land management activities consistent with direction in the Forest Plan and addressing major gaps between desired future conditions and the current conditions in the project area.

In 2017, an interdisciplinary team comprised of District and Forest resource specialists began assessing the existing vegetative conditions and management options within the Fourmile project area. The purpose and need for this project was developed when these resource specialists identified the specific gaps between desired conditions (outlined in the Forest Plan) and ground conditions (existing conditions) within the project area. In addition, a detailed roads analysis was completed in order to determine long-term access needs.

The proposed action (Alternative 2) was derived from these efforts, reflecting how the Forest Service could best close the gap between the desired and existing conditions, while meeting project objectives and eliminating or minimizing potential resource impacts. Alternative 2 actions or activities are described in Chapter 2.

Vegetation management was identified as the main focus of this project. All of the vegetation needs identified by resource specialists are tied to Goal 1.4 of the Forest Plan: provide terrestrial ecosystems in healthy, diverse, and productive conditions that support the diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species, and have a high likelihood of supporting the viability of native and desired non-native vertebrates and vascular plants well distributed in their ranges within the planning area over time (Forest Plan at 1-3). The proposed project also includes transportation management, wildfire and fuels management, and management of hunter hiking trails and wildlife openings.

Through examination of the existing conditions in the project area, five major purposes and nine needs for action have been identified based upon Forest Plan goals and objectives and other Forest Service direction.

Purpose A. Maintain or restore vegetation communities to their desired conditions in Management Areas (MA) 2A, 2B, 4A, 4B, and 8A (Forest Plan Objective 1.4a).

- Need 1. Reduce stocking levels in overstocked forested stands within Management Area 2A, 2B, 4A, 4B, and 8A.
- Need 2. Maintain or move northern hardwood stands toward an uneven-aged condition consistent with Forest Plan direction while maintaining or enhancing within stand species diversity.
- Need 3. Improve age class distribution, moving stands toward Forest Plan desired conditions.
- Need 4. Improve tree species composition to more closely reflect Forest Plan desired conditions.
- Need 5. Maintain or enhance existing forest research studies (e.g. continue research studies in the Argonne Experimental Forest or develop new research studies) to address vegetation concerns.

Purpose B. Contribute toward satisfying demand for wood products and special forest products through environmentally responsible harvest on National Forest System lands (Forest Plan Objective 2.5).

Need 6. Utilize commercial harvest as the preferred tool to achieve project objectives, contributing to the demand for forest products.

Purpose C. Need to provide a safe and effective road system (Forest Plan Goal 3.1).

Need 7. Build and maintain safe, efficient, and effective infrastructure that supports public and administrative uses of National Forest System lands.

Purpose D. Increase public safety related to wildfire potential (Forest Plan Objective 2.8c).

Need 8. Reduce hazardous fuels within communities at risk.

Purpose E. Maintain or enhance the diversity and quality of recreation experiences within acceptable limits of change to ecosystem stability and condition (Forest Plan Goal 2.1).

Need 9. Maintain the Scott Creek, Kimball Creek, and Nine-Mile hunter hiking trails (HHT) and associated wildlife openings.